

# Policies on the integration of refugee children through education at primary schools of two *Länder* in Germany

An analysis of recommendations and initiatives by supranational, national and local political stakeholders

Franziska Camille Doser

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## Abstract

In response to the 2015 migration crisis, the European Union, Federal Republic of Germany, North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony issued recommendations and initiatives on how the integration of refugee children can be facilitated by primary schools, through education. This study compares these policies based on the following factors: refugees' attainment of the national language and the support for their successes at school, the facilitation of intercultural dialogue and manifestation of citizenship and European values, the involvement of parents in their children's learning process, the inclusion of local communities in supporting the integration of refugee students, as well as their role in potentially mitigating disadvantages caused by a low socio-economic status, and sports.

Out of the eight categories scrutinized in the policies, the following three do not appear to be consistently included as fundamental elements in the integration of refugee children at primary school. These categories are the community aspect, socio-economic standard of students' families, and in-school sporting opportunities.

The findings of the policy analysis are also reviewed in terms of their reference to activities undertaken at primary schools to facilitate the attainment of European identity amongst newly arrived migrant children. This review establishes that European identity is not being promoted by the sample of teaching strategies and school initiatives evaluated in this study.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### *Welcome to Germany*

Since the refugee crisis commenced in 2015, over half a million school-aged children applied for asylum in Germany (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2019, online).

The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR)<sup>1</sup> was established as one of the core non-partisan initiatives collating current data and collecting new statistics on the role of migration in Germany's society. Their policy advice has been recognized by the German Federal Government in recent publications such as the 11<sup>th</sup> Report of the Federal Government Commissioners for Migration, Refugees and Integration<sup>2</sup> (2016), and their findings have found regular traction with German media sources such as *die Zeit* (2018), *Deutsche Welle* (2018) and *FOCUS* (2018). In 2017, only two years after the commencement of the greatest migration wave Germany has experienced since World War II, the SVR's highly anticipated Annual Report dealt with *Opportunities in Crisis: The Future of Refugee Policy in Germany and Europe*. The decision to focus on policy between Germany and the European Union at precisely this point in time reveals the significance of the two political actors' interdependence in grappling with the so-called refugee crisis.

One of the report's nine core messages highlights the urgency to "integrate refugee children as quickly as possible in standard school structures" (p. 6), referring to the statistics which showed that a large margin of people arriving in Germany during the 2015 migration wave are children. Statistics collated from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)<sup>3</sup> by the Federal Agency for Civic Education<sup>4</sup> (2019) show that in 2015, the number of asylum seekers in Germany was 441.899, and 26% of them were aged 0 – 15 years. The statistic further reveals that the peak of refugee migration to Germany was in 2016, when the number of applicants for asylum rose to 722.370, with 30% being children. The numbers of asylum have steadily decreased since then. However, it is worthy to note that the percentage of children included in the data increased to 39% in 2017, 44%

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<sup>1</sup> Known in Germany as: "Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration"; English translation used in this research has officially been coined by the agency

<sup>2</sup> Original title in German: "11. Bericht der Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration"; English translation used in this research has officially been coined by the agency

<sup>3</sup> Known in Germany as: "Bundesamt für Flüchtlinge und Migration (BAMF)"; English translation used in this research has officially been coined by the agency

<sup>4</sup> Known in Germany as: "Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung"; English translation used in this research has officially been coined by the agency

in 2018, and 45% in July 2019 (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2019, online), This means that since the beginning of the refugee crisis, the proportion of primary and secondary school- aged children rose from one quarter to almost half of all people applying for asylum in Germany.

Refugee minors, after having arrived in any of the EU member states, have an absolute right to attend educational facilities – more precisely, they are expected to do so. Migrant children are guaranteed a space at school within three months of their move into their host country (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2013, L 180/104); this has resulted in a high influx of students at primary and secondary learning institutions across all of Germany's *Länder*. Given such an increase in migrant children had not been expected by local education providers, most of the recommendations and initiatives on the integration of these children were newly drafted in response to the crisis – both at a national and local level.

In July 2018, the European Commission set up seven Working Groups for 2018–2020, tasked to support the common policy objectives of the ET2020 framework. As stated on the official website, ET2020 is “a forum which allows Member States to exchange best practices and to learn from each other” (2018d, online) and was introduced ten years ago by the Council of the European Union as Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (2009). ET2020 has four common European Union objectives, one of which references pathways to further the integration of migrant children by means of education: Strategic Objective 3 sets out to further cooperation on the topic of migrants to “develop mutual learning on best practices for the education of learners from migrant backgrounds” (2009, p. 10).

The aim of this study is to contribute to the ET2020 objective by analysing the coherence of policy and practices governing two distinct *Länder* of the Federal Republic of Germany, and the extent to how they appear to have been influenced by the recommendations from national and supranational levels. The *Länder* selected for this study are located in the former West and East of Germany, and have each taken in the respectively highest ratio of refugees since 2015. These *Länder* are North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony.

This research conducts a qualitative analysis of a sample of integration and education policies from the European Union, the Federal Republic of Germany, North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony, by evaluating the content of their proposed teaching strategies and school initiatives. The findings from this analysis illustrate that the policies are mostly coherent in their recommendations regarding language learning, school successes, intercultural dialogue, citizenship and European values, as well as parental involvement. However, the findings also indicate that the policies outlining the community aspect, sports, and socio-economic standard are inconsistent in addressing the importance of these factors in refugee children's integration at primary schools.

Vast research has previously been conducted regarding European identity attainment in children (such as Arndt, 2015, Barrett, 1996, Agirdag et al., 2012). This study seeks to contribute to this field by reviewing whether the teaching strategies and school initiatives proposed by the European Union, the Federal Republic of Germany, North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony include activities which deliberately promote European identity.

In order to outline factors which may contribute to the constitution of European identity in children, and how these can be facilitated in a primary school setting and by teaching staff, various theories and previous research on this topic are reviewed as part of this research. The education and integration policies scrutinized in this study do not appear to facilitate refugee children's attainment of European identity to a meaningful extent.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to offer an overview of the relevant data and literature, this chapter will assess statistics on the refugee crisis' impact on German schools and teachers, as well as systematically consider publications about political agendas, the migration history of East and West Germany, and elements which further integration and thus should be incorporated in teaching curricula at primary schools in North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony.

Literature, statistics and news articles contribute to the overall conclusion that an analysis of the teaching strategies put in place to achieve the integration of refugee minors is absolutely necessary. It will not only allow for a direct comparison between the *Länder* from the former West and East of Germany, but also contribute to the ability to make informed recommendations on the improvement of curricula. The value of this research lies first and foremost in its ambition to contribute to the creation of teaching strategies which provide equal opportunities for refugee children, who constitute a whole new generation of Europeans, to successfully integrate into society in *all* regions of their new home country.

### *More students – more teachers – less expertise*

In accordance with the Directive 2013/33/EU, Article 14, all refugee children arriving in the European Union shall be given “access to the education system under similar conditions as [Member States'] own nationals”, and they have the right to attend schools within three months of arrival (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2013, L 180/104). In Germany, hundreds of educational institutions around the country have responded to the high influx of students by employing more teachers and support staff and recruiting volunteers to help individual students become accustomed to classroom rules and behaviour norms (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2016, p. 11). A few months after the migrant crisis began, the German Education Union (GEW)<sup>5</sup> released a statement outlining their calculations for measures to meet the demands of the increasing numbers of students who are yet to learn the national language. According to the GEW, Germany requires over 24.000 additional teachers to appropriately cope with the increasing numbers of refugees in classrooms alone – this number excludes the

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<sup>5</sup> Known in Germany as: “Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft”; English translation used in this research has officially been coined by the agency



pedagogues required for early child education providers (2015, online). An article by the *Tagesspiegel* also pointed out that a high number of students are denied from enrolling at some schools altogether, as their classrooms are filling up beyond capacity with local and migrant children (Reiter, 2015, online).

The urgency for staff at schools is mirrored in recent employment numbers. According to the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK)<sup>6</sup>, there was a 15% increase in the number of newly hired public school teachers between 2014 and 2015 (2016, p. 7). Furthermore, the same source of statistics showed that 4.9% of current teachers at German public schools were recruited only in 2017. Looking at the trends from year to year, 2015 recorded by far the biggest ‘jump’ in teaching staff employment in a decade. Reflecting on the desperate situation in German classrooms, a 2017 *Frankfurter Allgemeine* article claims that 10% of the teachers recruited in response to the refugee crisis lack “pedagogical experience”<sup>7</sup> (Schmoll, 2017, online). On a similar note, Stoldt (2016, online) observes teachers being “over-challenged”<sup>8</sup> by the new demands arising in their classes, and cites one of the staff describing the ability to devote time to individual students as “objectively impossible”<sup>9</sup>. Other news publication report on cultural clashes and miscommunications between students (Agarwala et al., 2016) and commiserate the lack of appropriate textbooks and learning materials (Reiter, 2015). These observations beg the question: When will teachers receive the guidance and resources they need to turn flooded classrooms into efficient study environments? And how will they be able to successfully facilitate the integration of refugee children?

### *Integration through education*

It is widely accepted that the role of primary and secondary education has expanded from schools teaching basics in science and arts to schools becoming a facilitator of refugee child and youth integration (Massumi et al., 2015, p. 8). Importantly, the schools are not alone. Since the beginning of the European migrant crisis in 2015, many so-called *Refugee*

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<sup>6</sup> Known in Germany as: “Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (KMK)”; English translation used in this research has officially been coined by the agency

<sup>7</sup> Original quote in German: “pädagogische Ausbildung”; translation by the author

<sup>8</sup> Original quote in German: “überfordert”; translation by the author

<sup>9</sup> Original quote in German: “objektiv unmöglich”; translation by the author

*Welcome Classrooms*<sup>10</sup> have been created. Their function is to prepare newly arrived migrant children for the new educational environment they will be part of, as well as to give the students a chance to learn basics of the German language before having to actively participate in classroom discussions at primary and secondary education levels (Menkens, 2015). However, the criticism of these facilities is high. Juliane Karakayali, a migration researcher, pointed out in an interview with *Die Zeit* that Welcome Classrooms had no standard curricula to follow (Sadigh, 2016). Moreover, the lack of German-speaking peers impaired the refugee children's language attainment (Sadigh, 2016). Despite the chaotic and muddled first approach to easing the young migrants into the German school system, the government seems to acknowledge the initiative's potential. During Chancellor Merkel's visit to one of the Welcome Classrooms, she approved of its capacity to further integration and noted all children, regardless of their learning abilities, was worth being supported (Menkens, 2015).

### *Advocacy from Higher Powers*

Not just Merkel, but the federal government in its entirety emphasizes the importance of using integration as a pathway to achieving mutual acceptance and peaceful interactions between newly arrived refugees and the German people, as stated in the German Residence Act §93 (2017). The duty of the appointed Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, for example, includes "to promote mutual understanding and to counteract xenophobia" as well as "to provide ideas for the further development of integration policy in the European context" (Residence Act, 2017, §93 / 1). Here, it becomes obvious that the federal government is invested in the refugees' well-doing in both Germany and the European Union.

Unsurprisingly, the message of child integration through education runs through political documents and communications like a 'red thread' and does not halt before those issued by the European Commission: "Early and effective access to inclusive, formal education [...] is one of the most important and powerful tools for the integration of children [...]" (2017a, p. 12). Although this 'powerful tool' could also be used as a means to impose European culture and values on the newly arrived refugees, the 2015 European Agenda on Migration serves as evidence that the Union does indeed seem to strongly support a form

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<sup>10</sup> "Refugee Welcome Classrooms" is one of several expressions used to describe the groups at German schools which prepare new refugee students for participating successfully in the regular class activities

of integration which enables the refugees to maintain their culture and identity while being equipped with the necessary skills to make a life for themselves in their new home:

For the new programming period (2014-20), at least 20% of ESF resources will contribute to social inclusion, which includes measures for the integration of migrants with a particular focus [...] on children. The funds can support targeted initiatives to improve language and professional skills, [...] inclusive education, foster inter-cultural exchanges and promote awareness campaigns targeting both host communities and migrants. (European Commission, 2015, p. 16)

Though neither the German federal government nor European Union institutions have the power to dictate the schools' curricula, both parties have made available guidelines, recommendations and funds for integrating newly arrived refugee children through education. Their message is simple: further language attainment, create understanding for core values such as democracy and gender equality, and allow students to develop a national and European identity through knowledge and experience of culture and social norms. An example for the support and initiative provided by the government can be found on the website of Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education, where teaching materials for Refugee Welcome Classrooms can be downloaded for free. They come in form of posters of the European continent, textbooks about the equal rights of boys and girls, comics about animals living under the Basic Law and pictures about how voting works in the European Union and Germany (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 2017).

### *Together, yet alone: The Länder*

Germany is made up of sixteen federal states, the *Länder*, which are sovereign in the legislative authority they hold over the education facilitated in their respective regions. As prescribed by Germany's Basic Law, the *Länder* are responsible for implementing and creating teaching strategies and curricula which promote refugee integration (*Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales*, 2017, p. 38). Thus, how and what is taught to children and adolescents at schools in Germany is strongly determined by where they live. The grave differences resulting from this can be observed in the 2016 "Education

monitor”,<sup>11</sup> which depicts an annual multivariate analysis of the *Länder*’s educational efforts and the outcomes thereof. One of the study’s sets of data compares the “quality of schooling”,<sup>12</sup> which is measured by “the average competencies of students as deliberated by the IQB<sup>13</sup>”<sup>14</sup> (The Institute for Educational Quality Improvement, 2017). According to the Institute’s evaluation, Saxony scored 95 of 100 points, thus leading the *Länder* in its *quality of schooling*, whereas North-Rhine Westphalia was awarded only 40,4 of 100 points in total and is located towards the bottom of the ranking in this category (Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln, 2016, p. 191). With the fourteen remaining states scattered between the two extremes, the discrepancy between the educational standards of the regions is indisputably challenging – it urgently invites direct comparison of theoretical and practical realities of the *Länder*’s integration efforts (Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln, 2016, pp. 142–176).

While the regions’ governments and education ministries play a large role in the creation of curricula as well as the facilitation of effective teaching strategies and integration policy, one must also bear in mind the regions’ recent history of having been divided for forty-five years after World War II. The *Länder* in former West Germany and those in former East Germany have made very different recent experiences with migration: While guest workers from Mediterranean countries settled and became part of society in the West, Vietnamese and Polish manpower lived segregated from the local population in the East (Butterwegge, 2005). The collective memory of these events may well have an influence on the different *Länders*’ approach to the migrant crisis and thus, the integration of refugees. Another indicator of differences between the *Länder* belonging to the former Federal Republic of Germany and the former German Democratic Republic is the demographics of their citizens today. The most recent available statistics show that while the Western regions have an average “foreign population”<sup>15</sup> of 124.7 per 1000 inhabitants, the same calculation in the East results in an average of only 37.2 foreigners per 1000 inhabitants (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2019, online). To establish an overview which is representative of

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<sup>11</sup> Original name in German: “Bildungsmonitor”; translation by the author

<sup>12</sup> Original noun in German: “Schulqualität”; translation by the author

<sup>13</sup> IQB: The Institute for Educational Quality Improvement, Berlin; the IQB reviews current standards of learning in Germany

<sup>14</sup> Original quote in German: “die durchschnittlichen bei IQB gemessenen Kompetenzen der Schüler”; translation by the author

<sup>15</sup> Original quote in German: “ausländische Bevölkerung”; translation by the author

both historically and demographically diverse regions of Germany, it is important to analyse educational policies from *Länder* located in the West and the East.

### *Learning the language*

Before examining the teaching curricula in place for North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony – two cases that were selected to consider a difference between the Western and Eastern regions of Germany – it is important to know which elements of integration education are the most supportive and rewarding for students. In most empirical research, successful refugee integration is positively correlated with second language attainment (Anderson, 2004, OECD, 2010a). The expectation and experience that this claim is valid is mirrored in the curricula of the federal government-run integration courses for adult migrants, where learning German is *the* top priority (Kaufmann, 2016, p. 16). In order to promote this process in children, the government handed out sets of German books to the refugee minors written in a simple, accessible language, in the hope that their parents would read them to them in the evenings (*Die Bundesregierung*, 2016). The recommendation of reading with children provides a straight-forward opportunity to expose both children and their carers to the German language. Another pathway for making learning the language of their new home country easier and more enjoyable for refugee children is the promotion of *intercultural literacy*.<sup>16</sup> It is a concept discussed by Arizpe *et al.* (2014) – it suggests the use of visuals in school classes. This teaching strategy is said to enable migrants to express themselves through a medium alternative to language, and to allow them to better understand their fellow peers' culture (p. 305). However, language is not only a tool needed for communication with peers. Insufficient reading and writing skills at an early age have been linked to doing poorly in other academic disciplines such as maths and sciences (OECD, 2010b, p. 107). Therefore, successfully learning German is crucial for the students' overall school success, which will later determine their opportunities in the work force or tertiary education. According to research, a good outcome in learning a new language is predicted to be most likely when starting at a young age (Singleton and Ryan, 2004, p. 227). Therefore, the prevalence of lessons on local language is arguably the most crucial in primary schools' curricula and teaching strategy for integration education, as children enrolled in this level of education in Germany are typically 5–10 years of age.

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<sup>16</sup> Intercultural literacy: "active process involving competencies (i.e. knowledge of/or awareness of other languages) that can lead from an awareness of self-identity/culture to a more empathetic analytical, critical reading of intercultural situation" (p. 305)

### *More than just classrooms*

Aside from examining the *Länder*'s different approaches to teaching German language, teaching of topics such as culture and history is also necessary to scrutinize. According to Block *et al.*, schools ought to follow two principles to guarantee an integration-promoting experience for refugee children: “a holistic model and whole-school approach” and “an ethos of inclusion and celebration cultural diversity” (Block *et al.*, 2014, p. 1340). The following sections will elaborate further on each of these points, drawing on new research and considering practice-focused models. The goal is to show that the function of primary school classrooms has to become more than just a scholastic environment.

### *Tales of love, peace, and parents*

Some publications in the field point that presence of emotional support is an essential element of catering for the various needs of the new students. According to Matthews, teaching strategies promoting refugee integration should be mindful to “not overstate vulnerabilities and helplessness, but build on strength and resilience” (2008, p. 40). Instead of treating the children like victims of war and trauma, teachers are urged to foster an empowering and talent-evincing atmosphere. The classroom community, as much as Germany itself, should be a place for young refugees to start over after having fled their war-torn home. Therefore, curricula must also include comprehensive anti-bullying interventions. A 2015 interview-based research from the United States showed that even though some children may not complain to their teachers or parents about it, they do experience bullying by local students (Kisiara and Mthethwa-Sommers, pp. 1 - 3). Moreover, it is a common reality for refugee minors which may largely impair their integration process (Kisiara and Mthethwa-Sommers, pp. 1 - 3). The teachers' ability to counteract and conciliate the bullying of and between students is crucial in regard to the maintenance of a peaceful and inclusive classroom.

Another significant element for the creation of *holistic* primary school integration education is the involvement of parents through dialogue with the schools and assessment-related engagement. As pointed out in the handbook *Integrating Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children in the Educational Systems of EU Member States* by Nonchev and Tagarov (2012, p. 26), it is crucial for migrant parents to trust the school system which

their children are enrolled in, because parental approval of their children's learning environment enhances the likelihood of the child's regular attendance in class (p. 69). Furthermore, when parents respect teachers' methods and the school curricula, a positive impact is made on the motivation of their children to participate and learn (Anderson, 2004, p. 12). Although a great deal of responsibility and willingness to co-operate lies with the caregivers, it is up to the teachers to facilitate initial and ongoing communication between parents or caregivers and education providers. Prescribing teacher-parent dialogue in policy recommendations for schools should be classed a necessity when it comes to the integration of refugee minors.

### *Consideration of religious backgrounds*

Policy which facilitates the celebration of diversity is essential to successful migrant integration. This is due to the reality that some of the practices forming part of many Syrian refugees' religion (with Islam being Syria's state religion), are broadly discouraged in Germany and the broader European Union. Differing religious values may constitute challenge when it comes to understanding the inherent differences between migrant students and their German counterparts. German society may represent a contrasting picture to the society which refugee children had been accustomed to. Among other values, Germany has a high level of gender equality, freedom of speech and the domination of Christianity. These features are likely to differ from the migrants' memories of their home society (Parekh, 2006). Syrian migrant children who are now primary school-aged may soon make up a significant part of the new generation of Germans and will become members of the broader EU society. Therefore, educational publications and child-friendly learning materials that clearly outline the basic rights and values of people living in Germany should be easily accessible to migrant families.

### *Multicultural and intercultural, and equal all over*

Although raising the migrants' awareness of German (and wider European Union) social norms and constitutional rights is an invaluable point on the curricula, the exchange and understanding between the foreign and the national students has to be just as important. Successful integration, as defined earlier, is about the *equal* participation of all people living in the country. One way to ensure a parity in such participation in a country is through its members' respecting each other's backgrounds and diverse ways of life. This could be



achieved through methods promoting peaceful co-existence of all citizens' (and refugees') cultures at a young age. A popular approach advocates *multiculturalism*, or the idea "to move away from an ethnocentric alignment in policy and practice, and to reduce possible elements of cultural hegemony" (Valtonen, 2008, p. 69). A similar concept, *intercultural dialogue*, is enshrined in many European Union-issued publications and usually appears in the segments concerning themselves with democratic values, freedom and tolerance (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2016, European Parliament, 2016). The latter concept differs from the former in that it emphasizes linking commonalities between two cultures, leading to "understanding and interaction" (European Commission, 2017c, online).

For teachers at primary schools, the pursuit of multiculturalism and/or intercultural dialogue could be realized through establishing a platform for all students' cultural practices in the classroom. For example, the celebration of several different cultural or religious holidays may take place. Another way of fostering equality through cultural understanding is by incorporating diverse cultural and historical lesson content into curricula. Additionally, educational staff should encourage and facilitate dialogue between the children of different background, as opposed to expecting the refugee students' instant assimilation to the German way of life (Valtonen, 2008, p. 70). For example, instead of an immediate punishment of new students for not following classroom rules which may be foreign to them, teachers could explain why certain behaviours or words are discouraged at the school. Although it is uncertain whether this form of pedagogy is enshrined in teaching strategies, it is a valuable strategy for educational staff and teacher aids who were employed specifically to help with the newly arrived migrant students. This reflects what has been outlined in the previous sections – integration through education has multiple facets, most of which can only be achieved through the cooperation of multiple entities (government, teachers, parents and children) and the rule of mutual understanding and trust (Little, 2010, p. 30).



## Chapter 3: Theoretical Review

This study engages with two original theoretical frameworks that offer a comprehensive multifaceted explanation to the phenomenon in focus – integration of refugee children through education, and the facilitation of European identity attainment in German schools. These frameworks are:

- 1) Fostering European identity in refugee children, through education
- 2) Ensuring successful integration through teaching strategies and school initiatives

Both frameworks are constituted by a set of theories from diverse disciplines. Importantly, the multidisciplinary setting of this research reinforces its validity. Finally, synergies between the theories and disciplines proposed by this study are novel. They add innovatively to the debate on European identity and European integration in the context of migration (and the irregular migration spike the European Union has been challenged with since 2015), and aim to establish a solid foundation for an analysis of policies and initiatives which intend to facilitate child refugee integration through education.

The multidimensionality of the concept of European identity begs for a close examination of its meaning in this research. Firstly, as outlined by Meyer (2007, p. 31), European identity does not refer to the identity of the peoples of the European continent, but that of the citizens of nation states belonging to the European Union. This means that this study understands European identity as *European Union political identity*, which is necessarily linked to the rights and values exerted by the European Union on its member states.

### *Framework 1: European Identity as social group membership*

This study focuses on primary school children (typically aged six to ten years old in the German education system). According to Barrett, this period of children's lives is precisely when their European identity emerges, as they become psychologically sensitised to their social surrounding (1996, p. 366). In this instance, primary schools provide the said social surrounding, as this is where children spend a large amount of their young lives and are likely to have the most social interaction with their peers (Agirdag *et al.*, 2012, p. 201). Thus, it only makes sense that the definition of European identity used in this context is based on social and psychological perspectives. Tajfel's definition of social identity has

been used by authors exploring different avenues of political self-identification, as well as authors examining the topic of European identity in particular (Castano, 2004, p. 41, Agirdag et al., 2012, p. 200). According to Tajfel, social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from [their] knowledge of [their] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). A Syrian refugee child who has recently arrived in Germany may feel like a member of several social groups, starting with their immediate circle: their family and the native Syrian tribe they were raised in. Other potential social groups which they may feel affiliated with include Syrian nationals, refugees of war, and Muslims. In this instance, the goal of national and supranational integration efforts can be defined as promoting the children’s social group membership with the national state (Germany), as well as the broader European Union. Herrmann and Risse (2004, p. 9) have highlighted the relevance of Roccas and Brewer’s unpublished paper on complexities of social groups in the context of European Identity. An individual can belong to several cross-cutting groups despite recognizing that these groups do not objectively overlap. For example, although Syria is not part of the European Union, individuals are capable of subjectively attaching meaningful value to both group memberships.

Potential caveats arise when considering the European Union’s *entitativity*. This term was coined by Donald Campbell in 1958 and is used by Castano (2004, p. 44) to determine whether the European Union’s social entity is salient enough to have “psychological existence” in the minds of Europeans and thus, to which extent the European Union qualifies as a variable for the social group referred to in Tajfel’s definition of social identity. The theory around entitativity suggests that the more salient a social group is in the minds of individuals, the more likely these individuals are to identify with it. To be experienced as an entity within the identity discourse, the European Union must incite the following factors in its group members: a shared sense of fate and future, similarities terms of inherited dispositions (such as traditions and history), being in geographical proximity to each other, and the perception of forming a “bounded unit” (Castano, 2004, p. 44).

Complementary to this theory is Bruter’s idea of European Cultural Identity, which outlines two components: shared European heritage and symbolic manifestation of the European Union (2016, p. 1171). The former outlines the relevance of individuals’ perception of sharing traditions, norms, values and history, which only exist in the European arena

(Bruter, 2016, p. 1156); the latter describes the importance of symbols such as the shared currency or the European Union flag, as well as the role of media communication, in reinforcing the institution's political legitimacy (Bruter, 2016, p. 1170). These components are, according to Bruter, antecedents of *shared social identity*; a theory that, similar to Castano's research, focuses on the holistic aspects of European identity and thereby determines why individuals regard themselves as part of a collective 'us' in Europe. Both theories are highly applicable to the study of European identity formation in the primary school setting, as both stress the value of the explicit reflection on Europe's shared past, present and future in establishing European identity in the classroom.

The quest to establish an understanding for when, and how, an individual may identify as European led Thorpe (2008) to the concepts of *habitus*, *cultural capital* and *field* developed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In applying these concepts to understand European-ness, Thorpe describes *habitus* as the educational, financial and societal spheres a person moves in. These are often directly linked to their *cultural capital* – the amount of travel, European language learning and cultural fluency this person has engaged in Europe (p. 501). Thus, a person whose *habitus* enables them to culturally experience Europe should be more likely to attain European identity. In the context of this research, the educational aspect of *habitus* should be considered imperative to providing primary school children with early *cultural capital*. Finally, *field* describes the practices and interactive arenas which a person acts in, such as religion, law, citizenship or art. According to Thorpe (p. 502), individuals who operate in fields oriented towards Europe are more likely to have collected extensive relevant cultural capital and perceive their European membership as "worthwhile". Primary school children typically experience low exposition to fields revolving around Europe as a subject matter, underlying political context or tangible entity. Therefore, the primary school setting may be a unique opportunity to allowing children to gain relevant cultural capital and thus identify as European, despite the circumstances of their *habitus*.

In comparing Castano and Bruter's theories with Thorpe's conceptual framework in terms of the factors prescribed as necessities in the attainment of European identity, two different dimensions come through. The first one is a socio-holistic dimension. It is based on the interactions of European group members with each other, as well as the entitativity of Europe as an actor in the world. The second one is an ego-centred dimension; it revolves

around an individual's experience of the European Union, and the relevance it has to their life.

### *Framework 2: The many faces of integration*

Importantly for this research, integration may be understood and facilitated in very different ways, depending on the refugee's backgrounds and the elites' willingness to support their integration (Krasteva, 2013, p. 5). It has been argued that the prevalent type of integration in Germany is the one based on human rights values, and that this implies advocacy of such norms and values as "equality, non-discrimination, participation, empowerment and accountability" (Krasteva, 2013, p. 8).

The term *integration* has many diverse meanings in different contexts, regarding both theoretical perspectives and practical application. For this research, it is imperative to establish a definition which reflects on the phenomena of refugees, considers child well-being and the role of the education sector. As defined by the Commissioners of the Federal Government for Migration, Refugees and Integration, *integration* is the equal participation of all people "in school, at an apprenticeship, on the job market or in the health sector" (2016, p. 1). This affects anybody who currently calls Germany their home (2016, p. 1). The educationist Anderson (2004) describes the successful integration of children as a process which "includes acquiring the host language so that they can fully and successfully participate in school life and become a meaningful part of the new place" (p. 68). The definitions complement each other – the first provides an overview of the goals of integration for all refugees, whereas the second focuses on the dimension of integration which pay attention to the needs of minors. Most importantly, both acknowledge the importance of schools' role in facilitating opportunities for social interaction and societal participation.

In practice, social interactions can be described as most commonly based on the verbal, non-verbal or visual (such as symbolic or written) communication between two or more individuals. When this communication is carried as an "open and respectful exchange of views between individual and groups that have different cultural affiliations", Martyn Barrett suggests that this interaction may be labelled *intercultural dialogue* (2014, p. 26). The theory, which lies at the heart of Barrett's research published by the Council of Europe and thus can be regarded as indicative of the EU's vision of interculturalism, states that

at the societal level, intercultural dialogue helps to reduce prejudice and stereotypes in public life, facilitates relationships between diverse national, ethnic, linguistic and faith communities, and fosters integration, a sense of common purpose and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies (Barrett, 2014, p. 26).

Intercultural dialogue appears to be the be-all and end-all of European societal integration and is thus instrumental to the integration of refugees. In order to successfully participate in this dialogue, intercultural competence (made up of cognitive adaptability, empathy and multi-perspectivity) is required; a skill-set which can be developed and procured in educational settings such as primary schools (Barrett, 2014, p. 26). While curricula may include numerous exercises and learning techniques which further a child's mental capacity to negotiate and become familiar with diverse cultures, it takes the classroom setting to give local and migrant individuals the opportunity to socially interact and form bonds which internalise tolerance, mutual appreciation and intercultural fluency.

In their theory on migrant integration, Ager and Strang (2008) engaged with Robert Putnam and Michael Woolcock's social capital theories, which revolve around the sentimental assets associated with diverse social interactions. Ager and Strang revealed three strings that tie social capital theory into migrant integration: "Social bonds (with family and co-ethnic, co national, [...] groups), social bridges (with other communities) and social links (with the structure of the state)" (2008, p. 178). Each of these three factors represent individual forms of social interaction and form a promising foundation for the successful integration experience of refugees. According to Ager and Strang, the existence of social bonds allows individuals who recently fled their home country – and potentially lost large parts of their family – to find familiarity, a sense of belonging and security amongst one another (2008, p. 180). Social bridges can be pictured as the interactions between the local community and asylum-seekers; these interactions can occur a positive form, such as inclusivity, intercultural dialogue or mere friendliness, but are also known to appear in the shape of racism, exclusion and hostility (ibid).

Putnam himself states that social bonding is a process which occurs *inclusive* within groups (such as refugees who arrived in their host country at similar points in time and for similar

reasons), while social bridging constitutes *exclusive* bonds between diverse communities, with the potential to achieve common goals or societal advances (2001, p. 22). As summarised by Putnam, “bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, while bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves” (Putnam, 2001, p. 23). In reference to refugee integration, both dimensions are invaluable and ideally take place simultaneously and in overlapping community arenas; social bonding is a crucial asset to the reconciliation of shared trauma, and an opportunity to retain culture and traditions. Social bridging constitutes refugees’ pathway into the local community, the facilitation of intercultural dialogue and subsequently integration. Here, the role of primary school classrooms is to facilitate a space in which refugee children can connect with the local community.

Lastly, Putnam and Woolcock’s social capital dimension regarding the connection which refugees establish with the government – or in this case, the European Union – is captured in the concept of social links. This connection is most commonly forged through the state’s “facilitation of [equal] access to services” as well as the regional and national initiatives put in place to meet the needs of the newly arrived refugee groups (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 181). The youngest members of these groups will be spending a considerable amount of their day-to-day life in a primary school environment; therefore, it is imperative that all three forms of social capital defined by Ager and Strang are reflected and put into motion by the current curricula and teaching strategies.

One could argue that the ultimate *social link*, and thus one of the pathways to successful integration, is encapsulated by the concept of active citizenship. It is clear that most refugees, having sought asylum in a European Union member state, are unlikely to attain citizenship in the form of a national passport or the right to cast voting ballots (yet) (European Network Against Racism, 2001). However, recent theories suggest that there is much more to citizenship than meets the eye. Kostakopoulou (2007) argues that it is not European identity that makes the European Union a sustainable project, but the trust of the citizens in its process and purpose (p. 628). Accordingly, “the novelty of European citizenship lies precisely in its capacity to change our understanding of community and to make the boundaries of membership more open and flexible” (Kostakopoulou, 2007, p. 628). This definition of citizenship can be understood as cosmopolitan, as it is inclusive of non-nationals, and even accommodating to the changes in the social landscape since the

beginning of the refugee crisis. It is further reinforced by the European Union's self-declared "common values and general principles of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities" (Council of the European Union, 2018, p. 1). The prevalence of these European values in teaching materials may therefore facilitate integration *by means of* furthering European identity.

However, the weight of member states' self-distinction within the European Union and regarding their role in the European project must not be underestimated. European citizenship is, by nature, "derivative of and supplementary to national citizenship" (Kostakopoulou, 2007, p. 630); thus, one should expect the framing of supranational citizenship in education curricula to be done through the lens of the respective nation. This process has been coined *glocalization* by Philippou *et al.* (2009, p. 295), and determines that refugees' attainment of European citizenship is directly linked to their understanding of the citizenship in their host country. For primary school curricula this means that discourses promoting the benefits and values of active cosmopolitan citizenship in the respective member state as well as the European Union could be a crucial step towards successful integration.

### *Born this way*

Whether or not a refugee child will successfully integrate into the local community and potentially establish European identity during their time at primary school is not just dependent on surrounding circumstances and educational opportunities furthering their stages of integration. Posing a potential caveat to the educational pathways used to facilitate refugee integration in classrooms, theories suggest that various inherent realities may play a role in determining a child's likelihood to feel as though they belong to their new classroom environment and the European community.

The age of a child has been found to be a determining attribute in the manifestation of national identity (Barrett *et al.*, 1999, p. 10). A report by the OECD has outlined that there may be a correlation between "gender roles in migrant communities" and girls' successes at school (2010b, p. 47). Further, a study by Agirdag *et al.* (2012) has concluded that boys "identify more strongly with Europe" than their female counterparts (p. 208). The same

study also determined that families are less likely to form European identity if they are of a lower socio-economic status (Agirdag *et al.*, 2012, p. 208). Lastly, trauma experienced in their home country or during the process of seeking asylum “can impede short-term memory and can [thus] interfere with the attendance process for learning” (Frater-Mathieson, 2004, p. 29). Of course, education and integration policies cannot intercede with these parts of the lives of individual refugee children. Nonetheless, it is important that teaching strategies or school initiatives recognize the potential impact of these realities on the integration and learning journey of the students, and perhaps even put mechanisms and initiatives in place to mitigate any disadvantages.

### *Application to education policies*

This framework indicates that for teaching strategies and school initiatives to enable refugee students to experience integration at such a young age, it helps if the children have already surpassed – or are temporarily involved in – several complex stages of integration. From a pedagogical and educational standpoint, primary school curricula and teaching strategies can support these processes immensely by actively facilitating key components of integration in the classroom. For primary school-aged refugee children, these components should include learning the national language of the new environment and engaging successfully in the education system, becoming socially competent and forming meaningful relationships with local counterparts, participating in intercultural dialogue, making positive and bridging experiences with the local community, attaining a sense of citizenship/European values and experiencing parental involvement in integration processes. Another important aspect of the framework is the realization that some factors which are inherent to the lives of individual refugee children may undermine or slow down their progress of integration and the attainment of European identity. These factors include age, gender and socio-economic standard, and trauma.



## Chapter 4: Methodology

This research aims to scrutinize two aspects of policies on the integration of refugee children through education. Firstly, whether these policies also promote the attainment of European identity (which has been defined in Framework 1). Secondly, whether the elements derived from theories outlined in Framework 2 are indeed included in the recommendations for teaching strategies and school initiatives.

The analysis focuses on the sample of fourteen education and integration policies, recommendations and initiatives that were published within the past decade by the European Union, the Federal Republic of Germany, North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony. The sample is collated based on relevance to the research question, recency and target group. The selection of the sample is outlined in section 4.1. The examination of the sample of policies selected for this research will be undertaken by applying a qualitative content analysis. The content of the policies, recommendations and initiatives will be scrutinized against a set of categories, which are derived from the elements outlined in Framework 2 and referred to *external* and *internal* factors in this research. The categories of analysis are detailed in section 4.2.

This study focuses on refugee children attending local primary schools in two different *Länder* of Germany. Specifically, this research is interested in whether education and integration policies targeting these children promote their attainment of European identity. As expected, many policies published on integration through education do not exclusively refer to children or primary schools, but also teenagers or adults, and elementary or secondary education institutions. This is specifically the case for high-level, supranational recommendations. Therefore, the analysis of policies and recommendation will only be applied to specific sections of the texts, namely those that are targeted towards the focus of this study – “children”<sup>17</sup> or “young students/learners”,<sup>18</sup> and “primary schools”<sup>19</sup> or “schools for general education”<sup>20</sup> (or closely related abbreviations of these terms). If a section does not categorically include the education and integration of children, or initiatives facilitated at primary schools, it will not be targeted by the analysis.

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<sup>17</sup> “Kinder”

<sup>18</sup> “junge Schüler / Lernende”

<sup>19</sup> “Grundschulen”

<sup>20</sup> “allgemeinbildende Schulen”

Naturally, three quarters of the publications that provide evidence to assess stakeholders' discourses analysed in this research are written in German language. The citations and names of political actors included in the findings are therefore translations by the author unless stated otherwise; footnotes are used to reference the original phrases and terms.

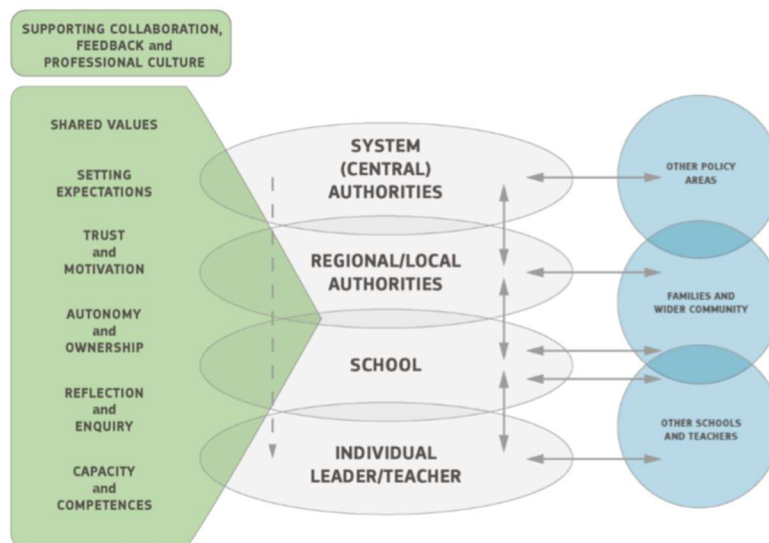
The question whether fostering European identity is highlighted as a priority by any of the policies and recommendations analysed in this research will be based on the empirical findings and discussed in Chapter 6.

## 4.1 Sample of policies

### *Three levels of political engagement*

The political stakeholders reviewed in this study have necessarily different delegations of power, geographical reach and functions of governance. The varying levels of impact exerted by the policy stakeholders on the objects of their publications has been illustrated in a publication by the European Commission's ET 2020 Working Group Schools 2016-2018, titled *European ideas for better learning: the governance of school education systems* (2018c, p. 6). The key notions under scrutiny are represented at the level of "schools" in this graph (Figure 5.1). The political influence over the refugee children and local primary schools is therefore illustrated by each of the diverse political stakeholders is proximity to this level.

Figure 4.1.1: VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEMS WITH AN APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE



Source: European Commission, 2018, p. 6

### *European Commission*

In the context of this research, the European Union constitutes the actor most distant to the key objects of the study – it is located on the level of *system/central authorities* in the graph (Figure 5.1). The education and integration recommendations published by this stakeholder arguably have the least *direct* impact on the integration of refugee children at primary schools in North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony. Nonetheless, the policy and initiatives published by the Union are of ultimate importance to the current reality of

refugee integration, not least because the EU's supranational governance encompasses 28 countries and thus comprises a pan-European – as opposed to *regional* or *local* – agenda for the role of education in migration. After all, the refugee crisis is a *European* issue.

The ET 2020 outlines the role of the European central authorities as “increasingly focused on supporting and enabling change at local level, rather than prescribing it” (European Commission, 2018c, p. 7). Indeed, while the European Union cannot directly determine the policies of member states' education systems, numerous documents promoting best practices and outlining European approaches to integration have emerged since the commencement of irregular mass migration in 2015. This study considers initiatives proposed by the European Commission as representative of the Union's political and strategic outlook, as it is the institution responsible for proposing new legislation and policy. The Commission's Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals, for example, intends to “help Member States as they further develop and strengthen their national integration policies for migrants from third countries, and describes the policy, operational and financial support which the Commission will deliver to support them in their efforts” (European Commission, 2016, p. 3).

The ET2020 working groups are also hosted by the Commission; the Working Group on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance, and Non-Discrimination through Education 2016–2018 produced a framework for inclusive education policies across Europe (2018b). The Working Group Schools 2016–2018 published several reports covering four “key areas of school education governance” (2018c, p. 3), and one of these reports directly addresses measures required for allowing migrant students smooth transitions into their new schooling system (2018a). The latest Erasmus+ Programme states that one of its general objectives is to “contribute to the achievement of the objective of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)” (2019, p. 7). The initiatives offered by this programme can therefore be used to review an extensive set of concrete examples for projects supporting the integration of children through education, as intended by the European Union. In addition to these three publications, the European Commission's communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture (2017b) will be

analysed as examples of European recommendations on the role of education in migrant children's sense of supranational citizenship and internalisation of European values.

### Germany

The Federal Republic of Germany can be considered as the primary recipient of the Union's policy recommendations. In this research, it is conceptualised as the *central authority* (Figure 5.1). The national government of Germany possesses governing power and influence on the integration efforts undertaken at primary schools throughout the country. To understand the governance of educational agendas in Germany, it must be noted that the education system in Germany is decentralized. The *Länder* have constitutional authority over schooling.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK), where each of the 16 *Länder*'s educational authorities is represented, provides directives for the Germany's regional educational systems to ensure nation-wide standardisation. In this light, the conference's resolution on Intercultural Learning and Education at Schools<sup>21</sup> (2013) and their report on the Integration of Young Refugees through Education<sup>22</sup> (2016) will be evaluated against the attributes outlined in Framework 2. Matters related to the integration of refugees lie with the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration; this office oversees the regional plan for integration and is in a position to fund local initiatives. Prominent documents outlining their current policy and initiatives include the National Action Plan for Integration (2011)<sup>23</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> Report of the Federal Commissioner (2016); they have been included in the selection of publications to be analysed, as outlined in Table 5.1.

### Germany's regions: the former West and East

Germany's federal law puts the 16 *Länder* in charge of how and what is taught at schools, so the education and integration of individual refugee children heavily depends on which *Land* they live in. The major differences in recent history and current demographics of the

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<sup>21</sup> "Interkulturelle Bildung und Erziehung in der Schule"

<sup>22</sup> "Bericht der Kultusministerkonferenz zur Integration von jungen Geflüchteten durch Bildung"

<sup>23</sup> "Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration"

former West and East of Germany call for the comparison of integration policy from two *Länder* located in each respective region. The two *regional/local authorities* selected as representative cases for the sixteen federal states (*Länder*) of Germany are North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony. As outlined in Chapter 2, these two *Länder* have had the highest percentual intake of refugees since 2015 within the regions formerly known as West and East Germany.

While all the Federal Republic's *Länder* are expected to draw on federal policy regarding integration and education objectives, it is important to note that the prioritization, execution and documentation of these matters lie exclusively with the respective *Länder* governments. Indeed, the approaches taken by North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony do not only differ in content. They are also implemented by differing local authorities.

### *North-Rhine Westphalia*

North-Rhine Westphalia passed state-level legislation to establish a legal basis for the *Land's* commitments to combating racism and furthering integration, titled *Law for the promotion of the societal participation and integration in North-Rhine Westphalia (Participation and Integration Legislation)*<sup>24</sup> (2012). According to a report by the OECD, North-Rhine Westphalia is one of only four *Länder* to have created a law which “defines integration of migrants as a cross-sectoral target” (2018, p. 76); and it is the only *Land* in the Federal Republic to have legally established “Communal Integration Centres”<sup>25</sup> in municipal administrative as well as independent districts. Seeing as though the law lays out the foundation of the *Land's* integration efforts, it will form part of this research. While there does not appear to be a policy outlining specific educational measures to be taken by these Communal Integration Centres, their “State-wide Coordination Body”<sup>26</sup> released a checklist which serves as a tool to further the interculturality of migrant children's' new school environment (2017); this will be included in the analysis as one of the regional initiatives to further integration at the primary school level. Since the begin of the refugee crisis in 2015, the “Ministry for School and Further Education of the Land North-Rhine Westphalia”<sup>27</sup> produced a policy (2016) as well as a decree (2018) that outline initiatives

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<sup>24</sup> “Gesetz zur Förderung der gesellschaftlichen Teilhabe und Integration in Nordrhein- Westphalen (Teilhabe- und Integrationsgesetz)”

<sup>25</sup> “Kommunale Integrationszentren”

<sup>26</sup> “Landesweite Koordinierungsstelle ”

<sup>27</sup> “Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nord-Rhein Westphalen”

and means by which schools should facilitate the integration of young refugees. Both texts will be included in this study.

### *Saxony*

Saxony does not have a specific integration legislation, although local political parties such as the Greens have been calling for one (2018, online). Only two policies by the *Land* were found to include the focus on the objects of this study; however, these publications are exponentially more detailed than those of North-Rhine Westphalia. The “Migration and Integration Concept II of the Free State of Saxony”<sup>28</sup> was created in 2018 and includes a variety of recommendations for education providers, as well as defined pathways and instructions for various inter-state actors to further local integration. A similar level of detail can be found in the “Curricula for Preparation Groups / Classrooms at Schools for General Education”<sup>29</sup>, which was revised from its initial form in the same year as the Integration Concept II was published. Both policies allow an in-depth view of Saxony’s approaches and initiatives to furthering child refugee integration through education; they will therefore be analysed in this study.

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<sup>28</sup> “Zuwanderungs- und Integrationskonzept II des Freistaates Sachsen”

<sup>29</sup> “Lehrplan für Vorbereitungsgruppen / Vorbereitungsklassen an allgemeinbildenden Schulen ”

Table 4.1.2: SAMPLE OF POLICIES ANALYSED IN THIS RESEARCH

European Union	Germany	North-Rhine Westphalia	Saxony
European Commission, 2017: Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture	The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, 2016: Report by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education about the integration of young refugees through education <sup>30</sup>	Law for the promotion of the societal participation and integration in North-Rhine Westphalia (Participation and Integration Legislation), 2012	State Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection of the Free State of Saxony, 2018: Successful migration and integration – living solidarity”: Migration and Integration Concept II of the Free State of Saxony
European Commission, 2018a: Continuity and transitions in learner development	The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, 2013: Intercultural Learning and Education at School <sup>31</sup>	Ministry for School and Further Education of the <i>Land</i> North-Rhine Westphalia, 2018: Integration and German language support for new migrant students	State Ministry of Culture of the Free State of Saxony, 2018: German as a Second Language - Curricula for Preparation Groups / Classrooms at Schools for General Education
European Commission, 2018b: Elements of a Policy Framework	11 <sup>th</sup> Report of the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, 2016	Ministry for School and Further Education of the <i>Land</i> North-Rhine Westphalia, 2016: Integration through Education	
European Commission, 2018: Erasmus+ Programme Guide	Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, 2011: National Action Plan for Integration	Communal Integration Centres – State-wide Coordinating Body, 2017: Checklist ‘Migration and School (EuS)’	

Source: autho

<sup>30</sup> “Bericht der Kultusministerkonferenz zur Integration von jungen Geflüchteten durch Bildung”<sup>31</sup> “Interkulturelle Bildung und Erziehung in der Schule”



## 4.2 Content analysis categories

### *Core attributes – deducted from previous research and theory*

The theoretical chapter of this research has outlined a framework which includes academic theories and ideas intended to contribute to the success of child refugee integration through the means of education at a primary school level. The framework also mentions factors inherent to the lives of refugee children which may impact their experiences in the classroom. Therefore, the categories of analysis of used in this study will draw from determinants of integration derived in both dimensions of the framework. They will be referred to as *external factors* and *internal factors*, as explained below.

External factors refer to social initiatives and schooling pathways which can be directly or indirectly supported by policy, education recommendations or funding by diverse actors on the political spectrum. For example, the extent to how much a primary school encourages the involvement of refugee parents in the educational journey or their child can be influenced by regional education policy or agreements between education ministers at a national level. Characteristically, the external factors identified in this research are ever-changing and differ between each school, or even classroom. On a micro-level, the support for factors such as language attainment or intercultural dialogue depend on circumstances such as the opportunities provided to teaching staff, the funding available to implement new projects, and the priorities identified by school principals. On a macro-level, the same factors are often heavily influenced by education policy, current political guidance about the integration refugees in Europe and Germany, the agenda of governing powers, as well as funding made available to relevant initiatives.

Internal factors, on the other hand, cannot be separated into micro and macro levels; they are inalterable realities in the children's lives. Age and gender are the most quantifiable attributes and play a role in the statistical likelihood of child integration successes. Socio-economic standard and trauma, on the other hand, are internal factors which differ from child to child. Inevitably, they determine the needs and living conditions which should be considered in integration and education policies.

The various external and internal factors have been summarized as an initial set of attributes in Table 5.2 below. Each of the policies and recommendations will be reviewed against these factors, and the findings will be systematically summarized in Chapter 6.

Table 4.2.1: CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS - INITIAL SET OF FACTORS

External factors of child refugee integration	Internal factors of child refugee integration
Language attainment Intercultural dialogue Success at school Social competence Relationships with peers Parental involvement Community aspect Citizenship / European values	Age Gender Socio-economic standard Trauma

Source: author

## Chapter 5: Empirical Analysis

### *Core attributes – prevalent in both previous research / theory and current policies*

The text analysis has revealed that the initial set of categories of analysis mostly align with the policies' key messaging. External factors such as language attainment, intercultural dialogue, success at school, parental involvement, the community aspect and the teaching of European values were repeatedly addressed by each of the stakeholders. However, while theories included in Framework 2 highlighted the importance of social competence and relationships with peers, these attributes of integration were referred to only infrequently in the policies and recommendations analysed in this study.

Interestingly, most of the reviewed policies include combinations of the core attributes, as opposed to isolated notions of each of the external and internal factors. The importance of migrant students' *language attainment* is most prevalently stated as a determinant of *success at school*, and recommendations around *intercultural dialogue* are repeatedly accompanied by an emphasis on fostering *citizenship/European values* in refugee children. This finding has led to the revision of the overview of factors scrutinized in the policies, as seen in Table 6.1. This new alignment of the attributes allows the findings and discussion sections to analyse the policies in a more precise manner.

The review of the publications has shown that only one of the four original *internal* factors derived from the theoretical review is substantively referenced in the stakeholders' discourses: Namely, *socio-economic standards*. Interestingly, the policy initiatives and recommendations which mitigate the potential disadvantages caused by this all refer to the opportunities provided by the *community aspect* of integration through education. Therefore, the two factors will also be aligned to appear in the same section of the findings.

Another result from the empirical analysis points to Germany's national and local affinity to including sports as a mechanism to further acceptance and multiculturalism amongst citizen and migrant children. Importantly, the theories reviewed above did not include this attribute in the process of child integration at all. This analysis has conversely discovered that sporting activities are indeed assigned a major role in national and local initiatives. Sports further appear to directly relate to the key objects of this study, as such activities

are often carried out in a school setting. As such, *sports* have been added to the revised set of *external* factors.

Table 5.1 presents the revised set of categories that inform the analysis in this study.

Table 5.1.: CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS - REVISED SET OF FACTORS

External factors of child refugee integration	Internal factors of child refugee integration
Language attainment <i>and</i> success at school Intercultural dialogue <i>and</i> citizenship / European values Parental involvement Community aspect Sports	Socio-economic standard <i>mitigated by</i> community aspect

Source: author

## Chapter 6: A closer look at education and integration policies

### *Learning German – a warrantee for school success*

Research and theories outlined in previous sections of this study have suggested that the most important step towards integration is the migrants' attainment of their new home country's national language. This has not only been linked to enabling communication with fellow students and members of society, but also to better outcomes in educational achievement (OECD, 2010b, p. 25). The analysis of the various policies and recommendations has confirmed that political stakeholders at supranational, national and local levels alike emphasize the importance of acquiring the *language of instruction*.<sup>32</sup> This attribute appears to be widely regarded as the fundamental requirement in facilitating successful integration. Notions of educational advantages found in the multilingual skill-sets of migrant children constitute further valuable pedagogic dimensions within the realm of language learning.

Listed as part of the key messages, the Policy Framework of the ET2020 Working Group on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination through Education 2016–2018 states that policy makers and school management are the stakeholders responsible for promoting “individualized approaches, differentiated learning and targeted support schemes” in classrooms (2018b, p. 6). Taking the notion of individualized approaches one step further, the ET2020 Working Group on Schools includes “valuing languages other than the language of instruction as an educational resource within the classroom” as one of only four measures for bettering migrant students' development through integration at European schools (2018a, p. 26).

Speaking multiple languages is not only described as an attribute which pre-disposes migrant children to picking up the language of instruction faster and experiencing more success in other school subjects. According to the European Commission, “the European integration process calls for acquiring good language competences (as) multilingualism represents one of the greatest assets in terms of cultural diversity in Europe” (2017b, p. 7). This statement introduces a new perspective for refugees' attainment of one (*or more?*) European languages: this is required not just to participate in the classroom, but also to further a sense of European integration. However, the Commission does not appear to

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<sup>32</sup> Refers to the language used in classrooms / the host country's official language(s)

distinguish between languages that may be considered as such “assets” of multilingualism. This finding begs the question whether the linguistic skills brought to Europe by refugees – including fluency in languages such as Farsi and Arabic – will be further developed in migrant children, in a formal school setting. It is unclear “linguistic diversity” is seen as a celebration of *all* languages, or just those spoken at national levels across the European Union.

All three publications by the Federal Republic of Germany appear to reinforce that the heterogeneity of refugee students must be taken into consideration by pedagogues, as they create pathways to facilitate the children’s attainment of the German language. Interestingly, however, the recommendations put forward in the 11th Report of the Federal Government Commissioners for Migration, Refugees and Integration (2016) mirror the notion of the ET2020 Working Group on Schools regarding the significance of retaining and developing the migrant children’s mother tongue. The text appears to criticize the fact that teaching staff and school curricula do not sufficiently recognize that the multilingualism of many children is a “special skill and resource which should inherently be developed more adequately”<sup>33</sup> (p. 47).

The idea of individualized approaches to language learning has been incorporated in the education policies of both *Länder*. The measures and initiatives published by the Ministry for School and Education of North-Rhine Westphalia endorse “study groups”,<sup>34</sup> which intend to prepare migrant students to participate in the *regular* classrooms<sup>35</sup> of local schools (2016, p. 5). According to a decree issued by the same authority two years later, how much each individual migrant student is asked to attend these study groups depends on the degree of their proficiency in German as well as the school’s teaching capacity (Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2018, p. 2). The Participation and Integration Law of the *Land* refers to the importance of valuing “natural multilingualism” in German language learning (2012, §2(3)), and the Checklist ‘Migration and School’ briefly instructs attributes of multilingualism to be used for teaching and learning advances in staff and students alike (Kommunale Integrationszentren - Landesweite Koordinierungsstelle, 2017, p. 8). However, neither these documents nor the

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<sup>33</sup> “[Ü]berdies sollte aus der Sicht der Beauftragten die bei vielen Kindern und Jugendlichen vorhandene Mehrsprachigkeit als] besondere Fähigkeit und Ressource grundsätzlich angemessener gefördert werden”

<sup>34</sup> “Lerngruppen”

<sup>35</sup> *Regular* classrooms refer to classrooms attended by local primary school children

two official policies analysed in this study appear to outline the advantages which multilingual migrant children may have in learning German and improving their school achievements in the long run.

Saxony's "curriculum for preparation preparatory groups / classes at schools of general education"<sup>36</sup> prescribes three stages of the schools' integration process (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus, 2018, p. 7). First, each student's previous exposure to schooling as well as their ability to pick up the new language is observed. Second, this assessment determines how the children are taught German, which school year they will enter, and in which order each child will be taking up additional subjects (such as maths, arts or biology); this stage is used to prepare the students for regular classrooms. Third, the students enter their new classrooms, while the subject "German as a second language"<sup>37</sup> remains in their curricula as a cornerstone of success in the local schooling system (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus, 2018, p. 7).

A striking difference between the publications analysed between the two *Länder* is that both policies of Saxony emphasize the values of migrant students' multilingualism at great length. The Migration and Integration Concept II of the Free State of Saxony<sup>38</sup> outlines two goals for schools in achieving integration: The first is to facilitate and improve the "consistency of the education process [throughout the schooling system] and create optimal transitions",<sup>39</sup> and the second is to streamline the "linguistic competencies in German language, while further advancing the special educational resource of bi- or multilingualism"<sup>40</sup> (2018, p. 14).

### *Intercultural dialogue and normative democratic values*

After language attainment, the furthering of intercultural dialogue may be the most highly prescribed external factor of child integration throughout the three levels of political

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<sup>36</sup> "Lehrplan für Vorbereitungsgruppen / Vorbereitungsklassen an allgemeinbildenden Schulen"

<sup>37</sup> "Deutsch als Zweitsprache"

<sup>38</sup> "Zuwanderung und Integration gut gestalten – Zusammenhalt leben: Zuwanderungs- und Integrationskonzept II des Freistaats Sachsen"

<sup>39</sup> "[Den gesamten Bildungsverlauf von der frühkindlichen Bildung über die Schule hin zur Erstausbildung/Studium als einen] durchgängigen Bildungsprozess (Kita, Grundschule, weiterführende Schule, Berufsausbildung/Studium) weiter verbessern und dessen Übergänge optimal gestalten."

<sup>40</sup> "Die sprachliche Bildung zur Entwicklung einer bildungssprachlichen Kompetenz in der deutschen Sprache weiter optimieren und die Zwei- und Mehrsprachigkeit als besondere Bildungsressource weiter fördern."

governance. The analysis of this attribute has led to some perhaps rather unexpected findings. Publications by the same political stakeholders promote intercultural dialogue while also prescribing children internalise European social norms and democratic values. To an extent, these exercises represent very opposing priorities. It further appears that the reasons for teaching *intercultural competencies* differ within the same actors' policies: Some recommendations intend to adduce citizen children how to think outside of their national and cultural values, while others advocate for all children in the classroom to participate in the celebration of multiculturalism. However, one common theme has emerged from each of the policies; namely, the call for all teachers to become interculturally literate.

The European Union's Erasmus+ Programme Guide includes a mobility project for educational staff that is particularly interested in supporting teachers "in such areas as training refugee children, intercultural classrooms, teaching youngsters in their second language, classroom tolerance and diversity" (2019, p. 52). This constitutes an interesting contrast to one of the key messages of the ET2020 Working Group's proposed policy framework, which states that "learning objectives and content should include an emphasis on the acquisition of social, civic and intercultural competences, as well as developing understanding and ownership of the common European values" (European Commission, 2018b, p. 3). While both instructions highlight the importance of furthering the intercultural dialogue between all children in a classroom, the latter determines that the attainment of European values is equally important. Another example included in the proposed policy framework even joins the two attributes:

It is essential to develop a culture of inclusiveness in schools that values diversity, fosters the talents of all learners and reinforces the sense of belonging to the school community based on democratic values and trust.  
(European Commission, 2018b, p. 6)

While it appears that the statement provides a straight-forward instruction for education providers, the premise of some democratic values underpinning inclusivity may not be immediately familiar to the newly arrived refugee children. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this research, the cultures inherent to newly arrived refugees are likely to strongly differ from the social norms and *values* practiced across Europe.



The bi-polarity of intercultural and supranational European norms does not appear to be prevalent in Germany's integration policies. In the National Action Plan for Integration, the "intercultural opening"<sup>41</sup> of learning institutions is described as a necessary pathway to furthering integration in educational institutions across all *Länder*; moreover, the curricula component of intercultural dialogue does not include caveats regarding the assimilation to European values (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2011, p. 67). However, the publications do indicate differing emphasis on *whom* the policies around interculturalism are targeted towards. One of the policies concerns itself exclusively with fostering cultural knowledge and tolerance in the entire classroom; the approaches range from advocating for "cultural education"<sup>42</sup> through subjects covering German art or media studies (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2016, p. 116) to commending the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs' 2015 declaration titled "depiction on cultural diversity, integration and migration in education media"<sup>43</sup> (p. 119). Conversely, another policy outlines educational strategies which solely revolve around how intercultural competencies may be taught to citizen children; for example by "promoting self-reflection, critical observations of one's own standpoint and behaviour through the inclusion of differing perspectives whilst studying the learning materials"<sup>44</sup> (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2013, p. 8).

The one overarching requirement emphasized by all the central authority's education and integration policies reviewed in this study is the development of intercultural literacy amongst teaching staff throughout Germany. The publications include diverse approaches in highlighting the importance of this professional up-skilling: one calls for higher levels of competency in "dealing with heterogeneity"<sup>45</sup> (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2013, p. 6), another critically reviews a study which found that "only 60% of parents witness intercultural competencies in teaching staff"<sup>46</sup> (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2016, p. 118), and yet another even prescribes the increased hiring of teachers with a migrant background of their own (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2011, p. 67).

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<sup>41</sup> "Interkulturelle Öffnung"

<sup>42</sup> "Kulturelle Bildung"

<sup>43</sup> "Darstellung von kultureller Vielfalt, Integration und Migration in Bildungsmedien"

<sup>44</sup> "Förderung der Selbstreflexion, der kritischen Beobachtung des eigenen Standpunkts und des eigenen Handelns durch Einbeziehung unterschiedlicher Perspektiven bei der Erarbeitung der Unterrichtsinhalte"

<sup>45</sup> "Umgang mit Heterogenität"; translation by the author

<sup>46</sup> "[...] jedoch geben nur 60% an, diese (interkulturelle) Kompetenzen in der Schule zu erleben."

North-Rhine Westphalia appears to attribute similar importance to further developing teachers' ability to incorporate intercultural activities and dialogue in their classrooms; the Communal Integration Centres are intended to help teaching staff with this through seminars and guidance (Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2016, p. 6). Further, the Checklist 'Migration and Schools' published for education providers in North-Rhine Westphalia outlines concrete aspects that can contribute to the heightened interculturality of school environments (Kommunale Integrationszentren - Landesweise Koordinierungsstelle, 2017). These range from multilingual signs and inter-religious calendars (p. 6) to multilingual learning materials (p. 11) and portrayals of diversity in the student body (p. 12). The checklist also makes the recommendation for schools' curricula to ensure that "education in democracy is an inherent feature of everyday teaching"<sup>47</sup> (Kommunale Integrationszentren - Landesweise Koordinierungsstelle, 2017, p. 12). A similar two-fold of commitment to intercultural dialogue and reinforcement of the need to teach migrant children democratic values is found in the measures and initiatives proposed by North-Rhine Westphalia's Ministry for School and Education (2016). The section "Democracy and Values Education"<sup>48</sup> states that the students should be "having conversations whilst studying alongside one another, learning to respect one another's backgrounds, values and experiences, empathizing with each other's viewpoints, and settling conflicts peacefully amongst themselves",<sup>49</sup> while at the same time emphasizing that "political education and education in democracy are duties of all subjects, [as they are] just as important for the German society as basic competencies in German, Maths and foreign languages"<sup>50</sup> (Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2016, p. 7). The latter recommendation appears to indicate that the *Land* has allocated a sense of urgency to the teaching of democratic values, which could be explained by the recent arrival of unprecedented numbers of refugees, whose beliefs and values are likely to strongly differ from those practiced in Germany.

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<sup>47</sup> "Die Demokratieerziehung ist fester Bestandteil des Unterrichtsalltags."

<sup>48</sup> "Demokratie- und Wertebildung"

<sup>49</sup> "[...] dass alle Schülerinnen und Schüler im Dialog miteinander und in gemeinsamen Projekten lernen, Herkunft, Standpunkt und Vorerfahrungen der anderen zu respektieren, sich in andere Sichtweisen hineinzuversetzen und Konflikte friedlich miteinander auszutragen"

<sup>50</sup> "Politische Bildung und Demokratiepädagogik ist eine Aufgabe aller Fächer. Sie sind für die Zukunft unserer Gesellschaft genauso wichtig wie die grundlegenden Kompetenzen in Deutsch, Mathematik und Fremdsprachen."

Within the section explicitly addressing the integration of migrant children through education, the Migration and Integration Concept II for Saxony refers to the fostering of interculturality only once – that is, in advocating for more intercultural competencies in teaching staff, and promoting the employment of additional teachers with migration backgrounds or fluency in multiple languages (2018, p. 14-15). According to the curriculum for German as a second language, one of the core purposes of teaching refugee children the national language is so they are able to engage in conversations about their “ways of thinking, behaviour, norms and value systems”<sup>51</sup> with other members of the *Land*’s society (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus, 2018, p. 12). More so, the education policy recommends the following topics of conversation for the classrooms facilitating lessons on German as a second language:

The lessons, which are marked by trust of the acceptance of personal remarks, thematise and reflect on the students’ examination of their multiple cultural associations to various societal groups. The students are supported in confidently developing their possibly hybrid identities within the migration society.<sup>52</sup> (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus, 2018, p. 12)

While this statement is intended to apply to all different stages in the school career of migrant students, the same emphasis of intercultural dialogue used to practice speech and writing can be found in the curricula’s section outlining the first stage of the language learning process. Primary school aged children are expected to “recognize cultural diversity in the context of their migration situation, as well as different norms, values, and viewpoints”<sup>53</sup> (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus, 2018, p. 15). This finding demonstrates that the *Land* encourages schools to promote intercultural exchanges very soon after the refugee children begin to converse in German.

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<sup>51</sup> “Denktraditionen, Verhaltensweisen, Normen und Wertesysteme”

<sup>52</sup> “Der Unterricht, der durch Vertrauen auf die Akzeptanz persönlicher Äußerungen gekennzeichnet ist, thematisiert und reflektiert die Auseinandersetzung der Schüler mit ihrer Mehrfachzugehörigkeit zu verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Gruppen. Die Schüler werden dabei unterstützt, ihre ggf. hybriden Identitäten in der Migrationsgesellschaft selbstbewusst weiterzuentwickeln.”

<sup>53</sup> “[...] nehmen die Schüler interkulturelle Vielfalt im Kontext ihrer Migrationssituation sowie unterschiedliche Normen, Werte und Sichtweisen wahr”

### *Not without the parents*

The findings around policies' prescription of parental involvement in furthering the integration of refugee children at primary schools constitute the most straight-forward section of this analysis. Political actors across supranational, national and local levels appear to agree that including young migrant students' parents or carers in day-to-day school life will positively impact their integration journey. Some policies have also raised awareness about the likelihood that the parents of recently arrived refugee students may not be able to speak German, and therefore all information relevant to their child's attendance, behaviour and progress at school must be conveyed in the language they are fluent in (such as Arabic or Farsi).

The ET2020 Working Group on Schools specifically refers to the engagement of parents or carers in the measures to consider within three different sets of guidelines which are targeted towards primary schools (European Commission, 2018a). The first recommends the provision of "clear and accessible information in a variety of formats, including written materials for learners and parents from minority linguistic and cultural background", which will allow guardians to stay informed about a student's individual progress and learning or leisure opportunities at school (European Commission, 2018a, p. 15). The second initiative intending to support refugee children's integration into the schools is the "informed consultation with learners, parents, NGOs, employers and social partners as a multi-stakeholder approach to curriculum development" (European Commission, 2018a, p. 23). This calls for parents being given the chance to have a tangible impact on how and what their children are learning, which could indisputably improve or create pathways for schools' successful facilitation of integration. While the second initiative refers to the students' learning opportunities within the classroom, the third measure talks about the importance of parental involvement in education outside of the school setting. More specifically, the ET2020 Working Group on Schools highlights the importance of "valuing and preserving play-based and non-formal learning, with active engagement from parents; [...] continuing into primary education at the start of formal schooling" (European Commission, 2018a, p. 36).

Germany's National Integration Plan includes the strategic objective of "participation of parents as attribute of early education"<sup>54</sup> (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2011, p. 54). This objective is broken down to three separate goals which outline pathways to how schools may involve migrant parents and caregivers in the learning and development of their children. Each of the goals appears to have been incorporated in policies by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany as well as the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration; therefore, the summary of the National Integration Plan's three objectives will include evidence of their implementation in subsequent publications. The first operative goal is the "strengthening of up-bringing and education competencies of parents with a migration background"<sup>55</sup> (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2011, p. 54); concrete recommendations for actions towards realizing this goal have been outlined in the 11th Report of the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration:

Strengthening parents' competencies on guiding the learning development of their children, and culturally sensitively imparting information about the German education system; supporting the intercultural competences of actors in learning facilities and thereby creating access for parents; and providing adequate resources for a structurally embedded and comprehensive cooperation of parents and schools"<sup>56</sup> (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2016, p. 122).

The second operative goal outlined in the National Integration Plan outlines the importance of retaining migrant parents and carers in programmes facilitated by schools, which are specifically designed to support them (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2011, p. 58). The decree by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs offers an insight into how such programmes may look. According to the publication, schools are recommended to bring in educational psychologists or social

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<sup>54</sup> "Partizipation von Eltern als Qualitätsmerkmal frühkindlicher Bildung"

<sup>55</sup> "Stärkung der Erziehungs- und Förderkompetenzen von Eltern mit Migrationshintergrund"

<sup>56</sup> "Elternkompetenzen für die Bildungsbegleitung ihrer Kinder zu stärken und Informationen zum deutschen Bildungssystem kultursensibel zu vermitteln; interkulturelle Kompetenzen der Akteure in den Bildungsinstitutionen zu fördern und Zugänge für Eltern zu schaffen; hinreichende Ressourcen für eine strukturell verankerte und flächendeckende Kooperation von Elternhaus und Bildungseinrichtung bereitzustellen"

workers to counsel migrant parents and their children alike; this is described as an “appropriate means to dealing with the great social challenges of the refugee-related increase in heterogeneity at schools”<sup>57</sup> (Kultusminister Konferenz, 2016, p. 8). Lastly, the third operative goal included in the National Integration Plan refers to the fostering “education partnerships”<sup>58</sup> between parents and schools (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2011, p. 60). The phrase “education partnership” is repeated and further expanded on in another policy by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs; as such, these partnerships are described to be gained through the involvement of parents at every stage of their child’s learning experience by means of information evenings, having a person of contact at the school, and “low-threshold opportunities for engagement”<sup>59</sup> (2013, p. 9).

In North-Rhine Westphalia, the political stakeholders’ drive to call for the implementation of innovative ways of using parents to support migrant students’ integration appears to be rather slim in comparison to those at a national level. The decree on the integration of new migrant students does refer to the building of education partnerships (Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2018, p. 2) and the Checklist ‘Migration and Schools’ includes steps that learning providers can take to include parents in the education journey of their children while being mindful of the likely language barrier, such as appointing a person of contact who “coordinates the processes of educational integration”<sup>60</sup> or facilitating “a structure which supports the exchange of parents amongst one another”<sup>61</sup> (Kommunale Integrationszentren - Landesweite Koordinierungsstelle, 2017, p. 6 - 8).

The Migration and Integration Concept II for Saxony appears to attribute a similar amount of importance to the involvement of parents at school as the documents analysed for the *Land*’s counterpart. The policy also refers to education partnerships as well as the importance of information being available in the parents’ native languages, and further

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<sup>57</sup> “[...] ist angesichts der fluchtbedingten Zunahme der Heterogenität in den Schulen ein geeignetes Mittel, um dort mit den großen sozialen Herausforderungen umzugehen”

<sup>58</sup> “Erziehungspartnerschaft” / “Bildungspartnerschaft”

<sup>59</sup> “niedrigschwellige Beteiligungsmöglichkeiten”

<sup>60</sup> “[...] Eltern werden feste Ansprechpartnerinnen und -partner genannt, die die Prozesse der schulischen Integration koordinieren”

<sup>61</sup> “[die Schule hat] eine Struktur geschaffen, die den Austausch der Eltern unterstützt”

recommends the “inclusion of migrant parents in parents’ councils”<sup>62</sup> and the “establishment of parents’ networks”<sup>63</sup> (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Soziales und Verbraucherschutz, 2018, p. 16). However, it does not appear that the document includes any further examples or points of reference for how and why parents’ inclusion in the learning development and integration of migrant children may be facilitated.

### *Using communities to mitigate socio-economic disadvantages at school*

The findings of this section may constitute some of the most important outcomes of this study, as they not only address the role of local communities in the integration of children at primary school, but also the means by which local communities can be used to mitigate the disadvantages that children of a lower socio-economic status may experience in their integration journey. The policies by the supranational and national political stakeholders draw direct connections between the educational integration of refugee students and the involvement of local communities – however, these connections do not appear to be included in any of the recommendations and initiatives analysed for the two *Länder*. Similarly, while the European Union and Federal Republic of Germany address the reality that the financial and living situation of refugee families may create disadvantages to their children’s development at school, neither North-Rhine Westphalia nor Saxony included remedies or mitigating actions in the policies analysed in this study.

The policy recommendations by both ET2020 Working Groups attest to the significance that the European Union assigns to mobilising individual learning providers to reaching out to the local community in their endeavour to facilitate integration. The local community actors referred to by this are “families of learners, different local communities including migrant or minority groups, civil society organisations (NGOs, religion and belief organisations, media, social partners, refugee organisations, etc.), youth organisations, other learning institutions, municipalities or local authorities” (European Commission, 2018b, p. 7). According to the recommendation, community engagement can be fostered by means of incorporating volunteering activities and visitations to community locations outside of the school into the learning curricula of young children (European Commission, 2018b, p. 8). In addition to this, the ET2020 Working Group on Schools calls for education providers to “to make the most of assets within the local community, to ensure that

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<sup>62</sup> “Mitwirkung in Elternräten”

<sup>63</sup> “Gründung von Elternnetzwerken”



learners benefit from developmentally appropriate civic and cultural educational experiences outside of the classroom” (European Commission, 2018a, p. 36).

The ET2020 Working Group on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination through Education 2016-2018 has created a link between students from families with a low socio-economic standard and the local communities when it comes to the facilitation of integration. The recommendations highlights that “participation in extracurricular and cultural activities should be encouraged and made accessible to all, in particular learners from underserved or disadvantaged communities” (European Commission, 2018b, p. 7). By offering extracurricular activities to migrant children, the local community may contribute to and reinforce the lessons on language, norms and values which the child received at school.

The publications by political stakeholders of the Federal Republic of Germany illustrate and promote the role of the local community in the overall integration of all recently arrived migrants at great length. It appears that only few connections are made between schools of general education and their surrounding neighbourhoods. One policy describes “clubs as well as religious and other societal organisations which offer children and teenagers opportunities to take responsibility in shaping their space within society and develop their willingness to engage socially”<sup>64</sup> as well as “culture and education providers in the region which can provide extracurricular learning activities”<sup>65</sup> as essential partners for schools (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2013, p. 11). However, the text does not outline any further initiatives for how schools should take advantage of such community institutions.

The reference to local community involvement is often made in regard to enhancing the integration opportunities provided to economically disadvantaged migrant students. The National Integration Plan calls for the *Länder* to improve opportunities for these children by providing families with community support, “strengthening schools and kindergartens in deprived areas”<sup>66</sup> and incorporating a “holistic conception of education as action field of

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<sup>64</sup> “Vereine sowie religiöse und andere gesellschaftliche Organisationen, die den Kindern und Jugendlichen Möglichkeiten bieten, Verantwortung für die Gestaltung des Zusammenlebens in der Gesellschaft zu übernehmen und ihre Bereitschaft für die Übernahme gesellschaftlichen Engagements fördern”

<sup>65</sup> “Kultur- und Bildungsträger in der Region, die außerschulische Lernangebote zur Verfügung stellen können”

<sup>66</sup> “Stärkung von Schulen und Kitas in benachteiligten Gebieten”



integration policy of integral city development”<sup>67</sup> (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2011, p. 220). This shows that Germany’s approach to the integration of refugee children does not only consider the mitigation of socio-economic disadvantages when it comes to education and integration through school. The Federal Republic also recognizes the importance of taking action to improve the facilities, learning quality and support for refugee children at low-decile schools, and even decreasing the factors that make a lower socio-economic status a disadvantage at the offset (through means such as urban planning).

Surprisingly, none of the policies scrutinized for North-Rhine Westphalia or Saxony appear to address the role of local communities in the integration of young refugee students. While § 3 of North-Rhine Westphalia’s Participation and Integration Legislation states that “the community engagement from and by people with a migration background should be strengthened in all areas of society [...] which requires the intercultural opening of clubs and organisations”,<sup>68</sup> (2012, §2 (5)). Comparably, Saxony’s Migration and Integration Concept II recommends that “as crucial actors of integration, local communities should be induced to make better use of their transformative potential for people with a migration background”<sup>69</sup> (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Soziales und Verbraucherschutz, 2018, p. 74). Both recommendations show that the *Länder* are aware of the importance of including local communities in the integration of newly arrived migrants. However, neither appear to prescribe actions to use community stakeholders in the capacity of education or integration of refugee children.

The analysis of the two *Länder*’s education and integration policies has further found that neither of the political actors appears to recognize the potential disadvantages posed to the progress of children’s in-school integration due to their socio-economic status; accordingly, the publications also do not outline initiatives to lessen the effects of this factor. Both North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony may have educational programmes in

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<sup>67</sup> “Ganzheitliche Konzeption von Bildung als integrationspolitischem Handlungsfeld integrierter Stadtentwicklung”

<sup>68</sup> “Das bürgerschaftliche Engagement von und für Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund soll in allen Bereichen der Gesellschaft gestärkt werden. [...] Dafür ist die interkulturelle Öffnung von Vereinen und Organisationen erforderlich.”

<sup>69</sup> “Die Kommunen sollen als entscheidende Integrationsakteure angeregt werden, ihre Gestaltungspotenziale zur Integration von Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund noch besser zu nutzen.”

place which address community involvement or dealing with migrant children from low-income households; however, these were not analysed as part of this research.

### *Germany's affinity with sports*

An unexpected discovery has been the extensive amount of recommendations to use sport as a means of facilitating integration in primary school-aged children. All of the political stakeholders and agencies at the national and local levels have been found to advocate for the use of sporting activities in bringing together citizen children and their migrant counterparts.

The European Union policies analysed in this study surprisingly do not list sports in relation to furthering the educational integration of refugee children. While the Erasmus+ Programme Guide does offer funding for sporting events and scholarships for children across the nation states to “increase awareness of the role of sport in promoting social inclusion, equal opportunities and health-enhancing physical activity” (European Commission, 2019, p. 234), these do not appear to be founded specifically for migrants.

The 11th Report of the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration states that “the network between schools and sports clubs in the social space should be improved” (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2016, p. 306), as “sports brings people together in a relaxed manner, despite their cultural differences, and can thereby strengthen the societal solidarity [...] no team is successful without cohesion”<sup>70</sup> (p. 309). Similarly, the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration has stated the following:

Exercise, play and sports support encounters of people from different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They contribute significantly to the overcoming of fear of contact or prevent this from occurring at all [...].<sup>71</sup> (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2011)

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<sup>70</sup> “Gerade der Sport bringt überall Menschen auch über kulturelle Unterschiede hinweg sehr unverkrampft zusammen und kann so den gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt stärken. [...] Kein Team hat Erfolg ohne Zusammenhalt.”

<sup>71</sup> “Bewegung, Spiel und Sport fördern Begegnungen von Menschen unterschiedlicher sozialer, kultureller und ethnischer Herkunft. Sie tragen maßgeblich dazu bei, Berührungssängste zu überwinden oder gar nicht erst entstehen zu lassen [...].”

Both policies place a heavy emphasis on the use of sports to contributing to the educational development and social integration of refugee children.

It appears that the relevance of including sport in integration initiatives of schools has resonated with political actors in the two *Länder*. The Checklist 'Migration and School' for North-Rhine Westphalia refers to sports clubs as relevant "networks outside of the school system",<sup>72</sup> with which the school should be in ongoing contact (Kommunale Integrationszentren - Landesweise Koordinierungsstelle, 2017, p. 17). The policy by Saxony's State Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection also includes the recommendation for sport to be used as a facilitator for the integration of children and adults alike (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Soziales und Verbraucherschutz, 2018, p. 59). The policies and recommendations published by the political actors on a national level have referred to several sport-specific programmes which were implemented in the *Länder*; however, they have not been included in this research.

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<sup>72</sup> "Netzwerke außerhalb des schulischen Systems"

## Chapter 7: Discussion

This research set out to examine the coherence of recommendations and initiatives regarding the integration of young refugee students through education at primary school, based on a sample of recent education and integration policies published by political actors at three levels of governance. An additional research inquiry was whether these policies also included notions of furthering the European identity of recently arrived migrant children.

The analysis of the inclusion of language learning and success at school in policies outlining teaching strategies and school initiatives to facilitating refugee integration for children at a primary school level has raised several interesting points. For one, it seems that the notion of *individualized* approaches to children's attainment of the language of instruction is echoed throughout the policies. The *Länder* appear to have set out to meet this recommendation by facilitating study groups (North-Rhine Westphalia) and preparatory groups (Saxony). However, a recently published news report states that "although ten thousands of refugees visit German schools, most do not have any contact with locals who do not have a migration background"<sup>73</sup> – this is allegedly in part due to the study / preparatory groups (Spiegel Online, 2018, online). This poses an interesting contrast to the findings that these groups are merely intended to support the newly arrived refugee students' attainment of the language of instruction, and to prepare them for their integration to the *regular* classroom community. Indeed, it is conceivable that migrant children may want to remain close to the friends they made during their first few months in the new learning environment, who also speak their native language and have similar experiences of migration, as opposed to befriending local classmates who already have their own circle of friends. This reality is likely to undermine their retention of the German language, and thereby possibly also their opportunity to do well at school altogether. After all, the educational theories and education policies reviewed in this study agree that successes at school are directly linked to the ability to quickly learn the language of instruction.

Unfortunately, the in-school segregation between migrant and citizen students also has an impact on the opportunities for naturally occurring intercultural dialogue. This reinforces

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<sup>73</sup> "Obwohl Zehntausende Flüchtlinge deutsche Schulen besuchen, haben viele von ihnen kaum Kontakt zu gleichaltrigen Einheimischen ohne Migrationshintergrund."

the importance of promoting such conversations as part of the curriculum in classrooms, as recommended in education policies by North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony. An interesting question is raised by the apparent necessity to artificially facilitate students' intercultural competencies: Can the integration of refugee children occur without intercultural friendships?

The publications examined in this research do not indicate that the political stakeholders specifically advocate for school initiatives that foster *friendships*, as opposed to mutual tolerance and respect. Friendships appear to be powerful determinants in the integration of primary school aged children, as they may impact factors such as language learning (and thereby, school success) as well as the relevance of intercultural dialogue. The idea that the success of integration may be higher in children who maintain friendships with their local counterparts constitutes an important area of future academic inquiry.

In analysing how the recommendations and initiatives included in this study promote both interculturality as well as citizenship and European values, it has been established that the exercise of promoting diversity and inclusivity in the classroom illustrates the fundamental meaning of democracy to refugee children. In learning that their cultural background and practices are accepted by their local peers, and witnessing the tolerance between all members of the school community, migrant students are expected to understand the value of democracy first-hand. In addition to this, the political actors' instructions to incorporate lessons on dealing with conflict and establishing trust indicate that the need for democracy in the classroom goes both ways – citizen *and* migrant students appear to need to learn how to live democratic values. Given the numbers of new refugee students are unprecedented in Germany's recent history, with over half a million applications for asylum received children aged 1-15 years alone (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2019, online), the need to educate local students on the importance of accepting peers with a foreign cultural background is as pressing as ever. The political actors' call for up-skilling teaching staff in interculturality also aligns with this reality. One could argue that the facilitation of democratic values is likely to impact migrant children's sense of belonging; this, in turn, could contribute to their sense of citizenship in Germany.

Interestingly, it does not seem as though policy stakeholders call for the introduction to German societal norms and values to form a part of schools' interactions with parents.

While parental input about the cultures and learning pathways of migrant children is encouraged, the education and integration policies do not seem to consider the significant role that parents play in the modelling of democratic – and thus, European – values. This proposes another relevant pathway for future study: Should schools take ownership of the democratization of refugee parents, in order to contribute to their children's successful integration?

According to policies by the European Union and the Federal Republic of Germany, parental participation is encouraged throughout the involvement of local communities in the educational facilitation of integration initiatives. This is important considering the recommendations regarding schools' responsibilities to enable access to extracurricular activities offered by clubs and organisations of the community – it is likely that the reason for why educational providers are tasked with mobilising migrant students' attendance at activities held by the local community is because parents may not be aware of these opportunities, let alone feel welcome. Child and parental attendance at communal events therefore not only contribute to the children's integration experience, but also the parent and carers' sense of belonging.

The collaboration between education providers and local communities appears to also play a major role in addressing the negative impact of socio-economic standard on refugee students' integration at primary school. The requirement for community involvement in improving educational services is explicitly outlined by a significant integration policy at the national German level. However, local integration initiatives by the *Länder* do not appear to be concerned with the quality of schools in lower socio-economic deciles. A report commissioned by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs has outlined the following implications of refugee families' socio-economic statuses on the successes experienced by migrant children at school.

Migration background is not an isolated and uniform aspect in education processes, but always interacts with other characteristics, especially the socio-economic situation of the families. The removal of disparities that are specific to migration backgrounds must therefore always include efforts to remove social inequities. (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2016, p. 24)

This raises the concern that the lack of political initiatives to further schools' co-operation with local communities to provide more opportunities for economically disadvantaged students may have a prolonged negative impact on the integration as well as educational outcomes for migrant children.

It has been stated in the findings of the research analysis that North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony both have implemented *Land*-wide initiatives on using sports as a means for child integration; however, these documents were not reviewed as part of this study. Given the recommendations for utilising sporting activities to further the integration of refugee children, an academic inquiry into this field could be very valuable to policy makers and schools alike.

In comparing the integration policies and initiatives of the two *Länder*, it must be noted that North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony strongly differ from one another. While North-Rhine Westphalia has a its own Participation and Integration Legislation and runs 54 Communal Integration Centres (Kommunale Integrationszentren - Landesweise Koordinierungsstelle, 2019, online), Saxony has a set Migration and Integration Concept, which includes concrete recommendations for teaching strategies. This divergence may be explained by the former West German *Land*'s history with migration, starting after the World War II. Saxony, on the other hand, only really started taking in migrants after re-joining the German Federal Republic in 1990, only thirty years ago.

### *European Identity*

According to the findings of this research, opportunities for refugee children's attainment of European identity may be found in their experience of learning one or more European languages. Of course, the national language of instruction will first and foremost be attached to the students' growing sense of citizenship and integration in the host country. It is important to note, however, that the attainment of another foreign language is compulsory across all forms of schooling as soon as the German language has been mastered to a satisfactory extent. This applies to refugee students from their first year of primary school in North-Rhine Westphalia (Bildungsportal des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2018, online) and in the third year of primary school in Saxony, according to the *Land*'s education legislation (2019, § 5 (3)).

According to Thorpe's account of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, cultural capital and field, the rapid attainment of two European languages is likely to further migrant students' cultural capital – after all, language classes are often supported by learning materials which talk about the cultures, histories and famous landmarks of the countries where the languages are spoken (Thorpe, 2008, p. 501). Learning to speak two foreign languages at the same time may therefore further the children's subscription to European identity.

Given the social norms at schools in the two *Länder* directly tie into the values of the Federal Republic of Germany – which are fundamentally democratic and supportive of multiculturalism – it could be argued that refugees are attaining some sense of a European identity. This was foreseen by Philippou *et al.*'s glocalization theory, which states that refugees' ideas about European citizenship are determined by their appreciation of their citizenship in a member state (2009, p. 295). Another finding of this research, which is relevant to the question whether European identity is fostered in refugee children during their integration journey, consists of the fact that policies by national and local stakeholders do not appear to explicitly promote the exposure of European symbols and history at the primary school level; this was described by Bruter as a significant step towards substantiating the concept of the European Union (2016, p. 1170).

An interesting bridge can be built between European identity and the use of sports to facilitate the integration of refugee children at primary schools, when considering the concept of childhood heroes and role modelling. A recent study on the effects of role models with whom children belonging to minority groups can identify has shown that these heroes “may influence social identity and improve confidence and inspire young people” (Vecci and Zelinsky, 2019, p. 16). Sportsmen and women are often regarded as heroes by boys and girls; in the case of refugee children, these heroes could be former refugees or fellow Muslims who have made it to the top of European sports in disciplines such as soccer, basketball or athletics. In idolising members of the European sporting community, refugee children may develop a sense of social identity towards Europe.

Furthermore, role models in the realm of sports may induce newly arrived refugee students to participating in the sporting activities offered by their schools. Through this, their integration to the classroom community may likely be more successful, and meaningful



connections may be formed between citizen and migrant members of the same team – the children would be living the European value of peaceful diversity.

### *Limitations*

This study was conducted in the form of a qualitative analysis. Therefore, it is possible that other researchers' perspectives on the same sample may slightly differ. The use of key objects to determine which sections of a policy were included in the analysis mitigated the risk of including recommendations or initiatives which did not target refugee children at primary schools. Furthermore, the application of external and internal factors allowed for a systematic review of the policy documents.

Another limitation consists of the reality that the sample of policy actors' publications on the integration of refugee children through integration does not allow for a side-by-side comparison due to the scope, legality and formulation of the texts. However, the detailed selection process justifies why each of the publications were chosen for analysis; this provides a conceivable rationale behind the selection process.

If this research had allowed for a more extensive inquiry of the topic, more policies targeting specific areas of integration (such as community involvement or sports) could have been scrutinized. Another interesting angle for the analysis of such recent educational policies would be the conducting of interviews with policy makers at the supranational, national or local level, or with teaching staff or headmasters of primary or secondary education institutions.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

The analysis of a sample of policies on the integration of refugee children through primary school education has shown that there are commonalities as well as discrepancies within the contents of the recommendations and initiatives brought forward by political stakeholders at the supranational, national and local level. The findings illustrate clearly that teaching strategies and school initiatives advocated for by the European Union, Federal Republic of Germany, North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony do not align in all the categories of analysis that they were examined against. External factors such as *language learning and success at school, intercultural dialogue and citizenship / European values* as well as *parental involvement* in the process of facilitating integration through education featured consistently across policy discourses of the four political actors considered in this research. However, the same publications were found to differ greatly across factors such as *community aspect, socio-economic standard mitigated by community aspect* and *sports*.

In order to further incorporate the recommendations and initiatives made by the supranational and national political actors, the *Länder* may consider including the involvement of local communities in the actions undertaken by schools to further refugee integration. Furthermore, such policies may also refer to the effects which a lower socio-economic status may have on successful integration and education successes of young migrants; and how community involvement may help to combat these effects. Additional value can be found in expanding the official policies of North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony to include sports as a tool for furthering integration at school. Directions for future academic research may be drawn from the queries on whether inter-cultural friendships play a role in child refugee integration, and whether educational institutions should facilitate lessons on democratic norms and values for parents,

The prevalence of measures to further refugee children's attainment of European identity at German primary schools is very slim; this research has found that neither national nor local education policies are explicitly committed to advocating for primary school students' identification with the European Union – it appears that, for now, schools already have their work cut out in ensuring that integration efforts are implemented across a variety of disciplines – from teaching the language to exemplifying democracy.

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